

SHEPPARD, SIM

INTERVIEW

9992

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BIOGRAPHY FORM

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

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Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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Field Worker's name Bessie L. Thomas.

This report made on (date) February 18, 1938. 1938

1. Name Sim Sheppard.

2. Post Office Address Lawton, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) \_\_\_\_\_

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

5. Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

6. Name of Father \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Other information about father \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name of Mother \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Other information about mother \_\_\_\_\_

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 5

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Bessie Thomas,  
Investigator,  
Feb. 18, 1938.

An interview with Sim Sheppard,  
Ex-Fire Chief, Lawton, Oklahoma.

The first fire equipment consisted of a light wagon with some chemicals, ladder, and a meager supply of other fire fighting stuff. When there was a fire, the first hack driver to reach the place, hitch up to the wagon and get it to the fire was paid \$5.00. Fires were numerous in early days, especially in the hot, dry summers on account of the tall dry native grass. A lighted match thrown down, or cigarette would set the whole prairie ablaze.

Heck Thomas was the first fire chief, and police chief, holding these offices for twelve, or thirteen years.

A day or two before the opening we were camped this side of Cache Creek, right close to the place where the slaughter house now stands. A man had been killed there the night before and his pockets rifled. There was no law then nearer than Fort Sill, about four or five miles to the North, and so the United States Marshal came down, and got the man who did the killing but we never heard anymore about him.

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We had to go to the fort to get our mail, at the Rich and Quinette Trading Post. This store is now the Fort Sill library. We stood in line sometimes all day for the mail, as it was given out alphabetically. One day I had stood there the entire day, and just as I got to the window, they closed up for the day and shut the window in my face. \$2.00 was the price paid by merchants to a man to go after the mail; they also furnished a horse and buggy, or a horse to ride. Men would sit on horses in line for hours, for a chance to get their mail; sometimes they would get just a post-card from back home, but I have seen them weep for joy over a few lines from the loved ones:

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A miner was killed in the mountains by being blown up. It was several days before his relatives were located at McKnight, which is now Walters. The undertaker was supposed to have the body ready to take to McKnight about six o'clock in the evening, but for some reason was unable to have it ready until eleven thirty that night. The man who was supposed to drive it over backed out and I was hired in his place, going alone. I hunted all over town

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for someone to go with me, but no one would go. There were no roads, just cut across the prairie in those days. The body was in a mahogany coffin with metal handles, and the coffin in a pine box, which was placed on a wagon. I sat on one end of the pine box and started out. There was no embalming in that time, and the man had been dead for several days. The team tried to run away. I had to go along Cache Creek, part of the way through heavy timber. I could hear something following the wagon in the leaves along the side; probably coyotes. I got below Junction City and the road ran through a big thicket and there I ran upon a ghost. It was white and looked as big as a good-sized mountain. The team stopped; one horse tried to go one way and one the other, and finally both balked and refused to go another step. I cussed and whipped as hard as I could and finally got the team whipped up. I couldn't turn around as it was pitch dark and I couldn't see a thing except the ghost straight ahead. I finally decided all I could do was to go up and meet the ghost. It was about two o'clock in the morning and there was a strong wind blowing. When I got up to the ghost I

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found it was a big old white horse, with a bell on it. I never was so glad to hear anything as I was to hear that bell.

When I had driven five or six miles out of Lawton, I heard a knocking and knew that the corpse was trying to get out. I never was so scared before or since, in my life, but all I could do was go on. Every few miles I would hear four or five knocks in the box. I had to go down through a creek and whatever it was that had been following me didn't like water as I didn't hear it anymore. The town marshal had told me when I got to McKnight that he would leave a light burning in his tent, so that I could find him and he would go with me to find the dead man's relatives. I found his tent and found him asleep in his chair. Woke him up and we started out again. We had gone only a few miles when I again heard the knocking sound and the marshal heard it too, for he asked me if I heard anything. I had been scared to death all night of it, but told him I heard nothing. In a few minutes we heard it again and this time the marshal jumped off and said he wasn't going to ride on that thing, as

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the man had come to life and was trying to get out. Finally we decided that we'd see whether the man was dead or alive. After removing about one hundred and fifty screws, (they screwed the top on a coffin with a screw every two inches then) we found that the poor fellow was still very dead. After looking further we found that a handle on the coffin had come loose, and each time we hit a rough spot it would knock on the side of the coffin. Needless to say I was glad when that ride was ended. I believe I aged ten years in that night.